

go/spencer



**First Year Speech Competition
Grand Championship**

Sade



Gillian



Firdaus



Rostyk



Tatiana



Sascha



Ben



**\$500
Grand Prize!**

MAC Robison Hall

Tues Feb 1

7:30pm



With the Mamajamas

The Spencer Prize in Oratory for First-Year Students

A production of Oratory Now

Executive Producers.....Mary Moore '22.5, Seth Brown '24
Production Advisor.....Ellie Thompson '22
Masters of Ceremony....Madison Middleton '22.5, Constance Gooding '23
Judge Liaisons.....Maya Fray-Witzer '22, Liza Toll '24
Contestant Liaisons.....Nick Jaccaci '22, Tanzim Ahmed '22, Henry Friedman '24, Michael Eller '24, Catherine Kish '24, Marlow Saucier '24

Qualifier Round Emcees.....Marlow Saucier '24, Youness Cheboubi '24, Catherine Kish '24, Erin Chouinard '24

Media, Music, Promotions.....Mary Moore '22.5, Celeste Levy '22, Hugh Easton '23, Vlera Hasani '24.5, Amelia Seepersaud '24, Manuel Morillo '23, Lucy Townend '22, Youness Cheboubi '24, Dan Levesque '22, Soph Charron '22

Graphic Design.....Seth Brown '24

Faculty Director.....Dana Yeaton
Spencer Prize Director.....Ben Powers

Special thanks to...

The Spencer Family, for their encouragement and support

Mark Christensen, Christa Clifford, and the staff at the Mahaney Arts Center

The Departments of Event Management, Media Services, and Student Activities

The 33 Middlebury faculty and staff who nominated 97 first-year speakers

Kim Marshall and the staff at the Davis Family Library

Oratory Now coaches who helped the speakers prepare

All 32 students who competed at the 3 qualifier events

Qualifier Round Judges: Caroline Crawford, Saifa Hussain, David Torres, Sarah Rogers, Pam Berenbaum, Claudio Medeiros, Ben Yamron, Cheryl Whitney Lower, Linsey Sainte-Claire.

The Speeches

(running order to be determined)

Ben Wagner

Firdaus Shallo

Gillian Skidmore

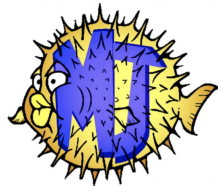
Rostyk Yarovyk

Sade Awodesu

Sascha Leidecker

Tatiana Bennett

Special Guests...



The Middlebury Mamajamas: Annabelle Iredale, Arjun Clare, Beck Barsanti, Caitlin Chan, Catie Clark, Jack Waitz, Jordan Ramos, Katelyn Wenkoff, Lily Staton, Marina Prikis, Mitchell Schroeder, Nick Smith, Peter Sergay, Peyton Mader.

***Presentation of the
Grand Championship Trophy***

The Speakers

(running order to be determined)



Ben Wagner

Legacies We Leave Behind

Ben Wagner is the guy who is usually wearing massive camo crocs. His buddies roast him for hating steak nights. By this they mean they're impressed that he is a vegetarian who is passionate about limiting the effects of global climate change. Wags is planning on being an International and Global Studies – Global Climate Change major, while minoring in Religion. When he's not sliding down Chapel Hill in the mud, he loves telling and listening to stories and is a passionate fan of 12pm Sunday breakfast at Ross.



Firdaus Shallo

Embracing Risk

Firdaus Shallo is a first-year student from Toronto, Canada. Coming from a big city, she is excited to venture off and explore what Middlebury has to offer. During her free time, Firdaus enjoys playing squash, learning new board games, listening to new music, and hanging out with friends. At the end of the day, Firdaus values every mentor that takes her under their wing and is looking forward to growing as a leader!



Gillian Skidmore

Dancing Between the Mind and Body

Gillian Skidmore is a first-year student from Anchorage, Alaska; that's her go-to fun fact. A lover of languages and travel, she's considering being an IGS major (if she can ever get into one of the classes). Wherever she goes, you can probably find her dancing- even when she's speeding around campus on her bright-red bike, complete with matching panniers. Gillian loves being in the outdoors, especially with her dog, Minnow. She wishes she had more time to read and write; more generally, she wishes we all had more time to explore our hobbies and take care of ourselves. She'd like to thank her friends, family, supporters, and mentors in both dance and speech.



Rostyk Yarovyk

Linguistic Profiling

Rostyk is an international student from Lviv, Ukraine. His biggest passion, aside from coffee, cheesecakes, and Taylor Swift, is learning languages and linguistics. In his opinion, language is what connects us all on the basic level. In Ukraine, Rostyk was an activist, having organized over 20 webinars and lectures in the schools of his town about topics such as mental health awareness and LGBTQI+ rights. He is really thankful to compete and represent the international student community at Middlebury.



Sade Awodesu

None of Us are Free Until We are All Free

Sade Awodesu is from Philly (the best city). At home, she has a rescue pit-mix named Joey, and she loves him with all her heart. She's a joint History-Arabic major and chose this because she thinks that analyzing history can help her learn how to build a better future. She chose Arabic because she is passionate about Black-Arab solidarity and thinks language can aid in building solidarity and thus achieving liberation. She knows that a world free from oppression and exploitation is possible, and her goal in life is to help reach it.



Sascha Leidecker

Abortion Rights *Content Warning re sexual violence. Support: [MiddSafe Advocates](#)

Sascha Leidecker grew up in Sun Valley, Idaho and is loving her first J-term at Midd. In her spare time she loves to read, listen to music, and get outside whenever she can. Sascha is majoring in International and Global studies and hopes to attend law school after college. Her piece was inspired by her History of American Women class and some trials our country is currently facing. She is excited for the Spencer Prize and is looking forward to her next three years here!



Tatiana Bennett

A Safe Space

Tatiana Bennett is a Philadelphia native who's passionate about writing, Webtoons, and being awesome. As a planned English major, she loves finding the beauty in words and their ability to create intricate imagery. When she's not reading comics until 3am, or begging her mom to send her oxtail and mac n cheese so she won't have to go to the dining hall, she's probably brainstorming new ideas and looking for ways to share her story with others. She wouldn't have made it as far as she has, or found the power in her voice without the endless support of her family and friends.

The Championship Judges

[Amy Morsman](#), Professor of History; Director, First Year Seminar Program

[Smita Ruzicka](#), Vice President for Student Affairs

[James Ralph](#), Dean Faculty Development & Research; Rehnquist Professor of American History & Culture

John Spencer



The Spencer Prize in Oratory honors the memory of African Studies Emeritus Professor of History and former Trustee John Spencer, who devoted more than 35 years of service to Middlebury College.

After earning a bachelor's degree from Princeton in 1953, John served for two years in the U.S. Marine Corps. He then worked at the National Sugar Refining Company, with the Institute of Current World Affairs in East Africa, at the Ford Foundation for Eastern, Northern, and Southern Africa, and as a Peace Corps evaluator for Gambia, Mauritania, and Senegal. His work with the Peace Corps eventually led him to earn his MA and PhD from Columbia University.

"Many current faculty will remember him as a mentor, offering sage advice about how to survive and be exceptional at Middlebury," said Ted Perry, Fletcher Professor of the Arts Emeritus. "Many students will remember his extraordinarily helpful role in emphasizing oral presentations, a practice he made central to success in his classes. He knew it was a skill they would need in whatever life's work they chose."

Former Middlebury President John McCardell Jr. reflected on his many years working with John Spencer: "John was a model administrator, a masterful teacher, a true student and mentor in the field of public speaking (keep your jacket buttoned, never say 'uh,' don't breathe through your mouth). He truly made the field of African History at Middlebury - students flocked to his courses."

